

Amalgamated  
Union of Foundry Workers

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REPORT OF FRATERNAL DELEGATION  
TO  
CHINA

15th August to 16th September, 1957

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# Report of A.U.F.W. Delegation to China

## 15th August to 16th September, 1957

Arising from an invitation to the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers from the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China, three representatives left London airport on 15th August, 1957, and arrived at Peking, the capital of China, on 16th August.

At the outset, the delegation, while appreciating that it would not be possible to explore the whole of this vast country in the time at its disposal, determined to submit a report which would be factual and give an honest impression of life in China, arising from the impressions gained from the tour, which, it was felt, would be as comprehensible as it was possible for the Chinese comrades to arrange.

### Welcome



WELCOME PARTY AT PEKING AIRPORT

Reading left to right: CHEN PEI-LING (Interpreter), T. GOLDER (Organiser), LEE YUNG-CHUNG (Vice-President, First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China), who accompanied the delegation throughout the tour, R. H. WARD (National Executive), T. COLVIN (Assistant General Secretary), and members of the National Committee

On arrival at Peking airport, we were met by the vice-president, a very competent interpreter, and several members of the National Committee of the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union. The usual customs and other formalities were dealt with by the trade union officials, who, it became very obvious, had considerable standing.

We were taken into a private room at the airport, supplied with Chinese tea and a fan; the fan, we were soon to learn, is a very necessary piece of equipment in China at that time of the year. After brief fraternal greetings, we were taken to our hotel, where, after removing the travel dust, we sat down to the first official reception from our hosts.

Our journey by car from the airport took us through old Peking, a relic of pre-liberation days. The living conditions of the people in this now small part of Peking gave us some idea of the tremendous amount of reconstruction which has taken place since liberation. When we saw the develop-

ment which had taken place in the building of workers' flats, schools, universities, hospitals, sanatoria, and roads, our tour confirmed the fact that the same progress is being made throughout the whole of the new China.

### Programme

On the morning of 17th August, we met the officials and members of the National Committee at the offices of the union, and after a tour of the offices, where the administrative set-up was explained to us in detail, a discussion on the programme for our tour took place.

The enthusiasm displayed by our hosts, and the number of places they were desirous of us visiting, made it very clear that if the ground was to be covered we would be in China for the remainder of the year. We therefore had to tell them that we had a job of work to do in Britain and must fix a time limit for our stay, and that we hoped, during the period, to gain an impression of the industrial and political atmosphere in the new China.

When the date of our return was arranged for 12th September, consultation took place in connection with what we wanted to see, and various suggestions were put into the pool for consideration. Our delegation's main interest was, of course, in foundries and working conditions. We also wanted some impressions of the living standards of the people in general, i.e., housing, health services, agriculture, education, recreation, and religious worship.

Arising from the discussion, the president, Mr. Kang Yung-Ho, intimated that a comprehensive programme would be arranged in accordance with the wishes expressed, and that one of the union's vice-chairmen, Mr. Lee Yung-Chung, would accompany the delegation throughout the tour, along with an interpreter.

It was mutually agreed that we remain in Peking until 20th August, leaving on that evening for Manchuria, the North-Eastern part of China, where we would be given the opportunity of visiting engineering, shipbuilding, railways, steel, and various other industries, also agriculture.

The following cities were visited, and the return date to Peking arranged for 8th September, Chang-Chun, Darien, Anshan, Sheng-Yung, Tientsin, Shanghai, Hang-chow, Wuhan, Hankow, Wuchang, and Han-Yung. This tour of 19 days entailed lengthy rail and air journeys, but nothing was spared by our hosts to ensure the comfort of the delegation in hotel and rail sleeper accommodation.

### Sightseeing : Cotton Mill and Prison Visit

During the three days prior to commencing the tour of Manchuria, we were taken on a sightseeing tour of Peking, which

included a visit to the one time Royal Palaces and grounds, which are now open to the public, and the lovely facilities which were once only the preserves of a few are now taken full advantage of by the ordinary people.

A full morning was devoted to a tour of Peking prison which accommodates prisoners serving up to 20-year sentences, and the facilities given for making our investigations, taking into account the language difficulty, were all that could be desired.

The director, or governor, of the prison met us at the gate, and after exchange of greetings we were taken to a very comfortable room, supplied with tea and cigarettes, and invited to put questions. We asked the director to give us a broad outline of how prisoners were treated, the offences they had committed and the kind of work they were doing, the hours worked, and the facilities for recreation and study. The director stated that the prison accommodated long- and short-term prisoners, civil and political; they were not separated and were all put on productive work which suited their capabilities. Sentences came under continual review and substantial reductions made where justified.

On making our tour of the prison, we were impressed with the well-equipped factory where all kinds of socks and light underclothing were being produced for sale in the State stores. We spoke to a number of the prisoners, two of whom could speak English, and ascertained that the hours worked were similar to those in outside industry. There were ample recreation, hospital, and canteen facilities, and the sleeping accommodation, while not letting one forget that they were in prison, was clean and adequate. There is no prison garb or uniform and the prison staff act in the capacity of organisers or supervisors. The only uniformed staff we observed were two soldiers at the entrance.

Before leaving Peking we visited a very modern cotton mill, where the majority of the workers were young people. The hours worked were  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours per shift, on a three-shift system. The most up-to-date mechanised machinery and ventilation equipment has been installed in this new factory, and huge blocks of modern flats were built adjoining.

### Social Evening

On the evening prior to leaving for Manchuria we were entertained by the National Committee of the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China at a social evening, where the music, dancing, and entertainment were provided by the workers from factories in Peking. A delegation from the trade union concerned with engineering in Japan was also present, and after the usual fraternal greetings, a very enjoyable evening was spent.

### Meeting the National Committee

After an early-morning visit to the Congress Hall, or House of Parliament, we

sat in conference with the National Committee of the union, who explained in detail their constitution. Their union organisation is based on industry, not occupation, so that all classes of worker, productive and administrative, in a factory are members of the same union.

The First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China caters for heavy engineering, motors, tractors, and shipbuilding. There are three levels in the administration: 1, National Committee; 2, city committee; and 3, local branch. The National Committee is comprised of full-time officers and the chairman of each city committee is also a full-time officer. Contributions are based on 1 per cent of earnings.

The employers, State or otherwise, also make a contribution of 3 per cent from each individual's earnings, regardless of whether or not they are members of the trade union. These contributions are paid into the local branches and are, in the main, administered at city and local level. Only a very small fraction of the contributions reaches the National Headquarters, which means, in effect, that there is no National Reserve Fund such as is common in the British Trade Union Movement. We were assured that there was no need for any such fund and that, in fact, if any such accumulation did occur, it was usually expended in creating further social amenities for the workers by way of additional sanatoria, palaces of culture, cinemas, &c. This in itself emphasises the tremendous difference between a capitalist and Socialist system of society.

### Apprenticeship and Wages Structure

The apprenticeship to all trades is for a period of two years, after which wage rates are governed by a series of examinations by a joint committee of trade unions and management, on a grading basis up to eight, which is the maximum. We were informed that the worker of average ability could reach the maximum in a period of five years.

There are bonus and piecework schemes very similar to those operated in this country. The general wages policy is determined by negotiations between the National Committee of the union and the administration of the socially-owned industry, and while basic wages are low in comparison with British standards, the National Committee assured us that this was due to the economic condition of the country arising from many years of neglect of heavy industry. All trade unions were, however, affiliated to a body equal to our own Trades Union Congress, and the raising of the living standards of the workers was continually under review by that body.

### Manchuria

Our tour of this industrial part of China lasted 19 days, during which we visited a motor factory at Chang-Chan (late Mogden). The foundry attached was semi-mechanised; the conditions were equal to a number of



SEMI-MECHANISED FOUNDRY ATTACHED  
TO MOTOR FACTORY IN SHANGHAI

similar foundries in this country, but we pointed out that they did not come up to the standards required by the Iron and Steel Foundries Regulations. Our hosts were very grateful for the criticism and made it very clear to us that the main object of our visit was to point out their shortcomings, as they fully appreciated that they had much to learn from British industry with its long experience.

In Darien, we visited a shipyard. The director, or manager, outlined the progress in the yard since liberation during 1945. There were 3,000 employees at that date; the number employed at present is 13,000. We saw the extensive preparations for extensions under the next five-year plan, which would provide facilities for the launching of deep-sea ships up to 20,000 tons.

There are well-equipped foundries attached to the shipyard (iron and steel), and an extensive export trade in anchors and chains is being carried on with Poland and India. The foundries and pattern shop are quite up to British standards.

While in Darien we visited a locomotive and carriage works, where we saw the Chinese "Peace" locomotive, which operates on long-distance journeys of runs up to two weeks. The facilities for the engine crew are far superior to anything provided in this country. Heavy wagons and oil tankers up to 50 tons are also produced in this factory. There are well-equipped foundries and boiler shops attached to the factory which now employs 10,000 workers, against 3,000 in pre-liberation days.

On leaving the factory, the delegation was presented with a photograph of the "Peace" engine, which now hangs in General Office. Before leaving Darien the delegation was taken for some sea-bathing, and wound up with a Chinese dinner and dance.

We then proceeded to Anshan, which is named the Steel City. We toured one of the many blast furnace plants, steel rolling mills, and foundries. The number of workers employed in this group, which is named the Iron and Steel Company Combination, is 100,000, and the conditions are equal to

those of steel and foundry workers of this country. The Steel City, we were informed, was well-equipped with coal mines, iron ore, and limestone quarries, which were accessible with the minimum amount of transport.

Before leaving Anshan we visited a Spa, provided for the treatment of workers in the steel group, equipped with special waters for the treatment of various complaints. There was accommodation for 1,000 people taking courses of up to two months.

Our next call was Sheng-Yung, where we visited a machine tool factory which employs 5,000 workers producing lathes of the latest designs. Plans for extensions were described to us and we were informed that with the technical assistance from the Soviet Union production would be considerably increased, carrying with it increased living standards for the workers.

After a social evening with the city committee we left for Tientsin, where we had the opportunity of visiting an iron and steel foundry producing light and heavy castings, and here, again, we found that while not up to the standard of the Iron and Steel Foundries Regulations, it compared favourably with many foundries in Britain. We also visited a wire and cable factory producing telephone and long-distance cable wire. The equipment and working conditions in this factory were of a very high standard.

After a 36-hour train journey we arrived in Shanghai, which, prior to the liberation, was the haven of foreign adventurers. On touring the city we were shown the various military concessions occupied by foreign Powers, which meant that in some cases one could not cross a street without a permit. Shanghai is now a very prosperous city with a population of 6,500,000 and, including a seaport, it has various types of industry, amongst which are heavy engineering and shipbuilding. The foundry employs 10,000 workers.

We had the opportunity of sitting through a church service, and if it had not been for the language difficulty, one would have felt he was sitting through a Church of England service in Britain.

We made an extensive tour of the docks, which were equipped with ample cranes and storage space for import and export goods.

While in Shanghai we visited a small instrument factory which was jointly owned by the State and private capitalists. The manager and his chief engineer, who were capitalists, spoke English. They explained that so far as they were concerned they had no desire to go back to pre-liberation days. They received a fixed interest of 5 per cent on the money they had invested, plus a salary as employees. They had representation on the People's Congress and labour difficulties were regulated by the trade unions. In summing up, they said that the Communist administration had greatly increased the living standards of the ordinary people.



Photograph of a large streamer hung in many of the factories visited. Translation: "Welcome to the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers' Delegation from Great Britain"

### Relaxation

On leaving Shanghai, a two-day programme was arranged amid the beautiful surroundings of Hangchow, which has been famous for its beauty spots since the year A.D. 909. A booklet in English was issued to the delegation, giving an historic introduction to the places of interest around the lovely West lake, which the Chinese people term a paradise. The scenery has considerable natural beauty, but man has added much to its charm and beauty over the years.

The delegation took full advantage of the time at their disposal to visit as many places as possible. The impressions created will be lasting, and, in particular, the fact that the ordinary people were now in a position to enjoy some of the relaxation facilities which for so many years were the privilege of only the few.

While in Hangchow we visited a silk factory. This is a light industry which is engaged on the production of pictures depicting various cities and industries, religion, and China's historical background, and is certainly a very thriving home consumption industry.

In keeping with the concern being shown by the State and the trade unions for the protection of the workers' safety and health, the sanatorium we visited in Hangchow, which was recently built, had the most elaborate facilities for medical and convalescent treatment.

After a Chinese dinner with the local trade union officials we returned for a second visit to Shanghai, to do some sight-

seeing and a tour of the State stores, where we saw a number of the products from Peking prison on sale. A visit was also made to a civil court. We had the opportunity of hearing an appeal by a young man against his prison sentence of three years for theft, and while his appeal was unsuccessful, the delegation was satisfied that he had a fair hearing and that the procedure of the court could be considered equal to that of Great Britain.

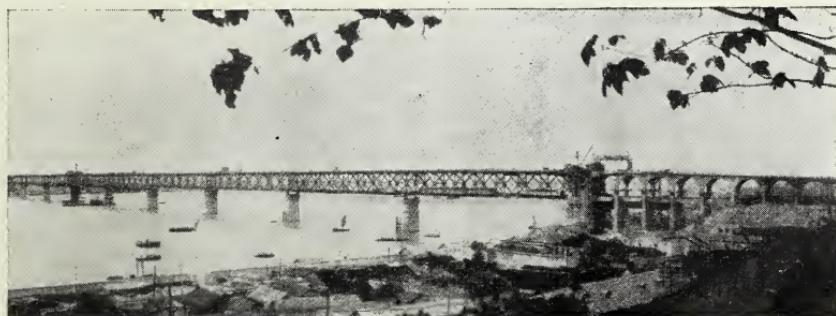
After a few hours' air journey we arrived at Wuhan, where we visited an iron and steel plant under construction. It is composed of 10 sections and will include blast furnaces, complete smelting process, all types of subsidiaries, including three large foundries, iron, steel, and non-ferrous, and a complete set of welfare facilities which will include a trade union hall, sports fields, and a club for the development of education and culture.

A large housing estate is being built in convenient proximity to the plant and, in the words of our hosts, a complete town will develop around this heavy industrial venture, which it is planned will be in production in three years.

Our last visit before returning to Peking was to the double-decked road-rail bridge over the Yangtse River. This bridge is a masterpiece of engineering, and was built with Chinese labour and planned by Chinese technicians according to Soviet suggestions. The bridge was near completion at the time of our visit and we had the opportunity of viewing the whole structure and, in fact, walked halfway across the road bridge.

The bridge was opened on 1st October, 1957 (China's National Day), and for the first time provides a road-rail link between North and South China. It is over one mile long with double rail tracks and a six-lane highway for road traffic. Ten-thousand ton vessels can pass beneath it. It also completes the link-up of the triple city known as Wuhan-Hangkow, Hanyang, and Wuchang, which had been separated by the Han and Yangtse Rivers.

The bridge was built in four years, two years ahead of its schedule, and makes it now possible to take a train from Canton to



DOUBLE-DECKED BRIDGE OVER THE YANGTSE RIVER, OPENED 1ST OCTOBER, 1957 (CHINA'S NATIONAL DAY)

Peking without a change. It will bring a unified system of rail communication throughout China. The enthusiasm displayed by the technicians and the workers impressed the delegation when they stated that they were working to build their country into a great Socialist state.

### The Trade Union's Place in Industry

During our tour of Manchuria we were greatly impressed by the important functions allocated to the trade unions in history. At each factory visited, the management and technical staff were represented but it was the chairman of the works committee who described the factory and was able to outline in detail the future programme, covering production and technical improvement, over a specified planning period.

### We Return to Peking

Upon our return to Peking we had three days left before leaving for home. A fairly heavy programme was arranged, including a visit to a State farm, and although the delegation had little knowledge of agricultural matters, the fundamental job of food-raising proved of considerable interest. The explanations given in connection with State farming, as against the old system of private enterprise, satisfied the delegation that the Chinese workers fully appreciated the fact that whilst living standards were still low, the living standards had considerably increased, and that there was now a feeling of security amongst the ordinary people which did not exist in the days of free enterprise.

Agriculture, in going over to co-operative production, is being gradually mechanised, thus ensuring increased production, which, in the words of our hosts, must carry with it increased living standards for the workers. The trade unions are playing an important part in mobilising the workers in the struggle to build Socialism in a vast country with over 600,000,000 souls, who, in the main, knew nothing but squalor prior to their liberation from free enterprise.

In accordance with our promise before leaving Peking we met the full National Committee of the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union and submitted, in a two-and-a-half hours' statement, the Constitution of the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers. This proved of considerable interest to our hosts, who intimated in the ensuing discussion that the text of the talk would be translated and used at the periodic reviews of the Constitution of the trade unions of the People's Republic of China.

The day before leaving Peking the delegation gave an eight-minute broadcast over the English Peking radio, and were paid the trade union rate for the job. As the payment was in Chinese currency, the money was spent in the State stores on purchasing presents for the families at home.

The remainder of our time was spent in sightseeing, talking to the people in the

parks, in the streets, in the shops and State stores, and in their homes, terminating with an all Chinese dinner, at which we were the guests of the full National Committee of the Union. The toasts from both sides made it very clear that there was a mutual understanding of the problems confronting the Trade Union Movement, and that the exchange of delegations between East and West was the solution if misunderstandings were to be avoided.

### Summary

On a tour of this description, with the tremendous amount of ground covered, it is not easy to describe adequately the full impressions of the delegation, but we feel we must stress the fact that the Chinese people have a very loving disposition, that they have been a downtrodden race for centuries, and that whatever we may feel about their system of government, the words of the capitalist in Shanghai have a very real meaning when he said that the Communist administration had greatly increased the living standards of the ordinary people.

### Trade Unions

Trade-unionism is voluntary and the percentage of workers in trade unions is 85 per cent. Their activities cover a wider field than the British trade unions, and through the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the workers participate in the fulfilment of production targets, improving quality and reducing production costs, negotiating wage rates, conducting political and technical education, improving welfare and industrial safety, and administering for the cultural needs of the workers.

The trade unions also administer the State Social Insurance Benefits, build and manage rest homes, sanatoria, holiday camps, and cultural palaces. We were very impressed by the facilities available to trade union members in the way of entertainment and sport, and were the guests of honour at several concerts, performances of ballet, opera, and musical plays.

### Industrial Welfare and Safety Precautions

The delegation was able to offer a number of suggestions for the improvement of safety precautions, this being one of the fields in which the Chinese fall behind Britain, and that this is fully appreciated by them is borne out by a State Regulation, signed on 25th May, 1956, which draws attention to dangerous dust. The regulation lays it down that "To maintain safety and health amongst the workers, factories using quartz sand shall, where possible, revert to the use of natural sand; a wet grinding process to be used instead of dry grinding. Where, for technical reasons, this is not possible, the production equipment should be mechanised and enclosed and the management must give more attention to dust prevention measures."

This is only an extract from one State regulation, from a booklet of 90 pages issued to the trade unions by the All-China Federation of trade unions. Members of the delegation were each supplied with a copy in English.

There are, however, quite a number of welfare and safety devices in the factories, i.e., first-aid boxes and rooms, protective clothing and appliances, and drinking facilities. Taking into account the length of time China has been industrialised as against Great Britain, we feel we must conclude that while the living standards of the workers are still low compared with British standards, the rate of progress has been faster than in Britain, covering the period under which the new constitution has operated.

### Housing

Arising from our impressions when coming from the airport in Peking, the question of housing had our special attention throughout our tour, and we did not have to be long in China to appreciate the extensive amount of work which had been done over a comparatively short period in connection with the rehousing of the people from areas such as we have referred to in our car drive from the airport.

The new dwellings, in the main, are in the form of apartments and are well built and well equipped with lighting, bathroom, and toilet facilities. We visited a number of these flats and the enthusiastic manner in which the women and men replied to our questions left no doubt in our minds that here was a people who had found living conditions which they had never believed were possible. A new attitude of the workers was developing since liberation from private enterprise.

### Religion

Due to the lack of time we did not visit many places of worship, but had ample opportunity of ascertaining that while the State does not encourage to any large degree the practice of religion, considerable State funds are expended on the upkeep of churches. The Buddhist religion is still practised in China, and the delegation was escorted through a famous temple by a monk who had a seat as a representative on the People's Congress of the Republic of China.

### Agriculture

Although time permitted of a visit to only one State farm, we passed through considerable stretches of the agricultural areas during our travels, and were able, through discussions with our hosts, to get some appreciation of the progress being made. Like the factories, the farm had its own hospitals, schools, co-operative shops, and cinema, and the building of houses was proceeding on a similar scale to the industrial areas.

Want of mechanised aids is the big drawback, and our hosts pointed out that while the people on the land are working

enthusiastically to increase production, far greater progress could be made if the mechanised aids which Britain can supply were allowed to reach China. A strong plea was made for peace and friendship between East and West, thus helping China to build her economy on a basis of normal trading in a world at peace.

### Visit to Moscow

Although not included in the programme, we would like to place on record our appreciation for the arrangements made by the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China which enabled us to spend two days in Moscow on our return journey home. Two members of the delegation had visited the U.S.S.R. during 1955, and this short visit presented an opportunity of seeing what progress had been made during the two years.

We were met at the Moscow airport by the General Secretary of the Heavy Engineering Union and an interpreter, and taken to the Ukraine Hotel, a lovely 30-storey building opened during the past year, its main purpose being the accommodation of foreign delegations. An extensive programme of sightseeing was arranged by our Russian hosts, which included a tour of the permanent exhibition where 16 of the Soviet Union's individual states display architecture and the various kinds of products of each state. A visit to a football match and a tour of the State stores and the Kremlin was also arranged.

At the offices of the Heavy Engineering Union we had a two-hour discussion with the National Committee, who impressed upon us their desire to receive many more delegations from Britain.

We were very impressed by the vast amount of building which had taken place since 1955 and, in particular, we noted, during our car ride from the airport, that the old wooden buildings had now disappeared and had been replaced by fine dwellings of the apartment type for the workers.

We wish to place on record our grateful acknowledgment to the Executive of the Heavy Engineering Union for the very fine programme arranged at such short notice.

### Conclusion

In concluding this report, we would express our appreciation for the opportunity granted by the First Machinery Industry Workers' Trade Union of China and hope that the impressions presented of the industrial and social conditions of the ordinary people in China will result in our members taking a greater interest in what is happening on the other side of the so-called Iron Curtain.

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